

**James Knox Polk to Andrew Jackson, April 3, 1826,  
from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by  
John Spencer Bassett.**

1 Copy. Polk was serving his first session in the House of Representatives.

Washington City, April 3, 1826.

*My dear Sir,* I should have written you at a much earlier period of the session, but for the consideration, that you were probably much perplexed by troublesome correspondents, and from the belief that I could not communicate to you any thing which you did not already know, or which could at all, interest you.

On Saturday evening the 1st June after a long and laborious discussion the casting vote was taken on Mr. McDuffie's proposition to amend the Constitution, 2 and stood in favor of taking the election from Congress 139, and against it, 52. In favor of the District system 90 and against it 102. There being a Constitutional majority in favor of the first resolution, the subject was referred to a select committee of 24 to draw out the details of a plan [of] amendment, embracing the object of the first resolution and report it to the House. You have no doubt seen my views at length upon this subject. I prefer the district system to any other, but it cannot be established as the uniform mode throughout the Union. Such are my well settled convictions from short observation here, of the absolute importance, not only to the party, the honor, and the dignity of Congress, but it is to be apprehended to the devotion and harmonious operations of the Government itself, that this important election should in no event devolve upon Congress, that in order to attain that desirable end, I am ready to do, as the venerable conventionists did—to compromise, to meet in a spirit of conciliation or middle ground and in order to obtain an important principle, surrender all minor considerations.

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2 Proposed Dec. 9, 1825; no. 542 in Professor Ames's list.

At the close of the discussion of this subject on Saturday, there was some sharp shooting in the House. Mr. Wickliff in his speech of Friday in illustration of the importance of the plan of amendment by him proposed, took occasion to review the course pursued by the present Secy. of State in the last Presidential election.

The friends of the Secretary were quite sensitive, and after having slept, and reflected upon the subject, and no doubt consulted with the prime minister himself, Mr. Trimble of Ky., and Mr. Vance of Ohio, appeared on the floor on Saturday as his champion and the common defenders of the Secretary and themselves. Mr. Trimble took occasion, in attempting to justify himself for the vote which he had given in the election, to refer to your report in relation to the conduct of a portion of the Kentucky troops at New Orleans, and assigned that as the reason why he had voted against you. The foul charge was properly met and spiritedly repelled, by Messrs. Moor and Henry of Kentucky. Both T. and V. were indirectly abusive and personal towards McDuffie, who rose after they had done, to enquire more distinctly what they had said, and whether the allusions were to him, and being evaded, though evidently much excited, yet he (McD.) firmly addressed the Chair in substance, as follows: "I understand the game, Sir, that is going on, and I know the dastardly individual who skulks behind the screen and works the wires and if the Secretary of State wishes *me* to notice his tools and under-strappers he must send *gentlemen* ; or if he will show himself, I will recognise *him* as a *Gentleman* . I will not call on his *minions* here, but if called on by them, I will for once forget that they are not gentlemen and will notice them as such."

The question was immediately put, and this is the last that we have heard upon the subject. What course they will take is unknown. The general impression is that there will be no fighting.

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Your Tennessee friends will sustain McD. in any extremity. In relation to Mr. Clay he McD. boldly upon the floor told a plain unvarnished story, and one so true as to make all concerned in the transaction feel it most sensibly.

Very Respectfully Your friend and obt. Humbl Svt.